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Attitudes Toward and Trends in Post-Adoption Contact

This literature looks at how various groups, including the public, pregnant adolescents, social workers, and others, view post-placement contact.

1. Sobol, M. P., and Daly, K. J. "Adoption Practice in Canada: Emerging Trends and Challenges." *Child Welfare* v 74, n 3 (May 1995): 655-77.

The National Adoption Study of Canada identified two major adoption trends in Canada during the years 1981-1990: 1) fewer children being adopted, and 2) an increase in the proportion of children being placed by private adoptions.

Forty-seven percent of private adoption practitioners allowed for open adoption while only 21 percent of the public agencies allow for this option. The authors stress that research indicates that open arrangements are often the preference for birthmothers. All types of service providers rated open adoptions as "moderately successful."

The research also found that men and women applicants over the age of 36 were primarily the clients of independent practitioners and agencies charging a fee, while younger applicants typically approached no-fee agencies.

2. Henney, S. M.; Onken, S.; McRoy, R. G.; and Grotevant, H. D. "Changing Agency Practices Toward Openness in Adoption." *Adoption Quarterly* v 1, n 3 (1998): 45-76.

The authors analyzed ways in which adoption agencies have changed their practice to encompass more openness in adoptions. Overall, the study found an increase in the number of agencies offering fully disclosed and mediated adoptions. Adoption agency professionals were first interviewed between 1987-89 and then interviewed again in 1993. Initially, 11 of the 31 agencies surveyed offered fully disclosed options; at the follow-up, 22 agencies offered fully disclosed options. Among the factors identified as contributing to the change were: client demand, changes in agency values, and competition from other agencies offering open adoptions.

3. Cleaver, H. "Contact: The Social Workers' Experience." *Adoption & Fostering* v 21, n 4 (Winter 1997/98): 34-40.

The impact of the Children Act 1989 in England and Wales, which was designed to foster contact between foster children and their families, is analyzed. According to interviews with 300 social workers, the Act has resulted in a considerable increase in the amount and frequency of contact visits; however, numerous obstacles remain to limit greater implementation.

4. Rompf, E. "Open Adoption: What Does the 'Average Person' Think?" *Child Welfare* v 72, n 3 (1993): 219-30.

Questions about open adoption and adoptees' searching for biological parents were included on a multipurpose telephone survey questionnaire administered to 640 adults. Fifty-six percent of the respondents were females, the median age was 47 years, and the median number of years of school completed was 12. Cross-tabulations were made using the variables of race, gender, age, education and personal knowledge of adopted persons. Seventy-one percent of all African American respondents approved of open adoption as compared to 51 percent of all Caucasian respondents.

One-half of the respondents who knew an adopted person approved of open adoption, as compared to 59 percent of those who did not know an adopted

person. There was little difference between those with minor children living at home and those without a child in the home regarding approval of open adoption; slightly more than one-half of each group approved.

Most adults appear to be in favor of open adoption and believe that adoptive parents should help their children find their biological parents if they so desire.

5. Kallen, D. J.; Griffore, R. J.; Popovich, S. N.; and Powell, V. "Adolescent Mothers and Their Mothers View Adoption." *Family Relations* v 39, n 3 (1990): 311-16.

This research focused on the attitudes which adolescent mothers and their own mothers have toward adoption and also explored the degree to which openness may be associated with the views young women and their mothers hold concerning adoption.

The study was undertaken in Michigan at a time when open adoption was limited. The survey sample consisted of 105 pairs of Caucasian and African American young women who elected to parent their infants, and their mothers, and 14 Caucasian teenagers who chose to place their infants. Sixty-five birthfathers were part of the sample group but no analyzes of their responses is provided.

There was moderate to strong support for open adoption among all groups with Caucasian adolescents and their mothers showing more support than African American adolescents and their mothers. The greatest support for open adoption was expressed by the young women who had recently placed an infant. The research suggests that adoption is viewed negatively by those not directly involved with it.

6. Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. *Benchmark Adoption Survey: Report on the Findings*. Photocopy manuscript. New York: Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, November 1997.

A representative sample of 1,554 adults participated in telephone interviews designed to examine their opinions on open adoption, adoptees's search for their birthparents and adoption in the context of welfare reform and teenage pregnancy. Among the key findings were that overall, most Americans hold a favorable opinion of adoption as an institution; however, some skepticism did exist. Less educated individuals were more critical of adoption than more educated individuals were. Men were less supportive than women and African Americans were less supportive than Caucasians. Regarding open adoption, most respondents think it is a good idea in only a limited number of cases.

7. Ryburn, M.; McCaulay, D.; and Powell, J. "Public Attitudes to Post-Adoption Contact." *Adoption and Fostering* v 21, n 4 (1997/98): 57-9.

One hundred and fifty households were randomly sampled and asked whether they strongly approved, tended to approve, tended to disapprove, or strongly disapproved of open adoption. Sixty-six percent of the respondents approved of or tended to approve of post-adoption contact. No significant differences were found when age, gender, ethnicity, and personal knowledge of an adoptee were controlled for in the survey sample. A large majority of the sample, 74 percent, felt that adopted people would want to search for their birthparents. Respondents with dependent children were more likely to hold that view.

8. Hughes, B. "Openness and Contact in Adoption: A Child-Centered Perspective." *British Journal of Social Work* v 25 (1995): 729-47.

The findings of a study of the views of 30 British birthparents are presented. The women (N=28) and men (N=2) had placed their children prior to the acceptance of openness. In general, the majority of the participants responded positively to the ideal of openness in adoption. However, the responses were not as positive when asked if they would have preferred to place their child in an open adoption. They expressed concern for themselves, concern for the child, and concern for the adoptive parents.

The majority of the respondents also reported that, in principle, access to information about the adoptive parents and about the child's progress in the family was a positive approach. When the principle was applied to their individual situations, their views remained consistent.

Three major themes emerged from the data: 1) All of the birthparents felt a link should be maintained between themselves and their child, although there was uncertainty about how this should be accomplished in practice. 2) Twenty-five of the respondents strongly supported indirect, mediated, information-based communication, with 17 respondents advocating for information exchange to continue throughout childhood into adulthood. Concerns about this process were centered around fear of disruption and fear of creating strain and tension in the adoptive family. 3) A small number of the sample felt that birthparents should be given the right to search for their child once the child has reached the age of maturity.

Related publications:

Hughes, B., and Logan, J. *Birthparents the Hidden Dimension*. Manchester, School of Social Work, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of Manchester, 1993.

9. Barth, R. P. "Adolescent Mothers' Beliefs About Open Adoption." *Social Casework: The Journal of Contemporary Social Work* v 68, n 6 (June 1987): 323-31.

This study sought to assess pregnant adolescents' (N=59) and adolescent mothers' (N=67) experience with and expectations about adoption, ratings of social and personal factors in their decision to keep or relinquish a child, and preferences for characteristics of open adoption.

The women ranged in age from 13 to 19 and were involved in school-age parent programs in five states. Among the group who were already mothers, only two had children in adoptive placements.

While open adoption practice was not important to all participants, it was significantly important for those who were concerned about having information

about their child and for mothers who wanted their child to be with a family that held their religious beliefs.

10. Kallen, D. J.; Griffore, R. J.; Popovich, S. N.; and Powell, V. "Adolescent Mothers and Their Mothers View Adoption." *Family Relations* v 39, n 3 (July 1990): 311-16.

This research focused on the attitudes which adolescent mothers and their own mothers have toward adoption, and also explored the degree to which openness may be associated with those views. The study was undertaken in Michigan at a time when open adoption was limited.

The survey sample consisted mainly of 105 pairs of Caucasian and African American young women who elected to parent their infants, and their mothers, and 14 Caucasian teenagers who chose to place their infants. Sixty-five birthfathers were included in the sample group.

There was clear support for open adoption among all groups with Caucasian adolescents and their mothers showing more support than African American adolescents and their mothers. The research suggests that adoption is viewed negatively by those not directly involved with it.

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